DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 874 CG 015 366

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TITLE Self-Disclosure and Self-Monitoring: The Effect of a Personality Variable on Reciprocal Self-Disclosure.
PUB DATE Mar 81
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (27th, Atlanta, GA, March 25-28, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; Cognitive Processes; Cues; *Imitation; Individual Differences; Influences; Interpersonal Relationship; *Modeling (Psychology); *Prompting; Role Models; *Social Behavior
IDENTIFIERS *Self Disclosure

ABSTRACT

Research on self-disclosure has suggested that in dyadic social interactions, self-disclosure by one member of the dyad tends to be reciprocated by the other. Little is known, however, about the parameters of self-disclosure and reciprocity. Investigators have sought to relate self-disclosure to various personality constructs, such as self-monitoring; high self-monitors are sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others and often use others' disclosures as cues for their own behavior. College students completed the Self-Monitoring Scale and were classified as either high self-monitors (N=24) or low self-monitors (N=24). Each subject was paired with a confederate to discuss four topics. The confederate spoke first, disclosing information that was either high or low in intimacy. The subject then discussed the same topic. Later, subjects completed questionnaires concerning their impressions of both the confederate and the issues discussed. Analysis of the data revealed that high self-monitors were significantly more likely than low self-monitors to imitate the confederate or present similar information. (Author/NRB)

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Self-disclosure and Self-monitoring: The Effect of a Personality Variable on Reciprocal Self-disclosure

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Paper presentation at the
Southeastern Psychological Asociation
Atlanta, Georgia
March 25-28, 1981

CG 015366

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Self-disclosure and Self-monitoring: The Effect of a Personality Variable on Reciprocal Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure, or the process by which one person lets himself/herself be known to another person, is a phenomenon of increasing interest to social psychologists. Of the growing literature on self-disclosure, one of the most consistent findings is that in dyadic social interactions self-disclosure by one member of the dyad tends to be reciprocated by the other (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Cozby, 1973; Huesmann & Levinger, 1976). In spite of the expanding literature, the basis for reciprocity in self-disclosure is not clearly understood. Early work was largely descriptive, relied on correlational data, and employed self-report measures as a major source of data (Altman, 1973). This early research frequently cited the "norm of reciprocity" (Gouldner, 1960), the "dyadic effect" (Jourard, 1959; Jourard & Landsman, 1960) or a social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) as an explanation for their conclusions. While these theories do provide a framework, the major empirical research did not begin to occur until the late 1960's. It has sought to validate the occurrence of reciprocity and to identify those dimensions which effect or explain reciprocal self-disclosure.

In an early laboratory study which demonstrated reciprocity (Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969), 48 female undergraduates revealed to each other by exchanging notes. Subjects were asked to exchange notes on a series of items with a stranger. Each person in the group had the opportunity to select items that ranged from low to high in intimacy.

The researchers formulated three predictions. Higher (more intimate) disclosures would be made by those who received higher disclosures, i.e., reciprocity would occur between disclosures. Second, there is a social reward

for disclosing. Disclosing individuals are better liked because they are more rewarding. Finally, it was hypothesized that authoritarian individuals are more suspicious of strangers and in strange settings would disclose less than nonauthoritarian subjects.

Strong support was found for the reciprocity hypothesis ($F = 22.17$, $df = 2/88$, $p < .001$). Also, the correlation of average intimacy of disclosures received and disclosures made by subjects was .77. Support was also found for the hypothesis that subjects who disclose more intimate information are better liked; however, it should be noted that even for least liked subjects, reciprocity occurred. Finally, no support was found for the position that authoritarian subjects will disclose less than nonauthoritarian subjects will disclose. In spite of the absence of support for the hypothesis concerning authroitarianism, the researchers report "great individual differences in the average intimacy level" and suggest that other personality variables influence self-disclosure; however, they offer no suggestions as to what personality variables are important for future consideration.

Another laboratory study that considered reciprocity in dyads (Ehrlich & Graven, 1971) assigned males to high and low intimacy conditions. Reciprocity was demonstrated on the measures of intimacy; however, on the measure of selection of conversational topics they only manifested the same pattern topic disclosure. A measure to determine past history of self-disclosure showed no relationship between a history of self-disclosure to current self-disclosure behavior. Although finding no relationship between their individual difference measures and current self-disclosure, Ehrlich and Graven discuss the need to research past differences in self-disclosure or differences in individual perception of social relationships and situations.

Other researchers have also confirmed the phonomena of reciprocal self-disclosure. Jourard and Jaffe (1970) demonstrated the "dyadic effect" or

a correlation between a subject's disclosure "output" and the disclosure "received" when the duration of the disclosure or length of utterances was measured. Furthermore, in this interview setting the interviewee did not only match the length of response of the interviewer but also they followed the interviewer's example in the intimacy of their disclosure. This matching for intimacy occurred in spite of previously indicating their unwillingness to disclose on the more intimate topics. Rubin (1975) in two field studies also found some support, as well as a possible limit to self-disclosure. In the first study, persons waiting in airport lounges were asked to provide either "handwriting samples" (control conditions) or written "self-descriptions" (demand characteristic or modeling condition). Subjects who received the request for self-descriptions wrote longer and more intimate information. They followed a reciprocal principle in that their disclosures matched the prior "personal" description written by the experimenter. Rubin assumed that subjects in this condition were unclear as to appropriate behavior. (What is meant or what kind of disclosure is appropriate for a "self-description?) The presence of another who is revealing personal information requires that one respond appropriately. In other words, reciprocity occurs when one is uncertain as how to act but seeks to act appropriately. In these instances the disclosures of others serve as discriminative cues.

In a second but related study, experimenters pretended to copy a standard message or to write an "original message" (personal) for each person approached when collecting handwriting samples. Messages were either low, medium, or high in intimacy. Here, as predicted, subjects in the "nonpersonalistic condition" modeled the experimenter's level of intimacy. Also, as predicted, subjects in the low and medium conditions reciprocated disclosures; however, subjects in the high intimacy condition were less likely to reciprocate. Rubin concludes that

trust is necessary for reciprocal self-disclosure. He believes that subjects presented with personal self-descriptions which were high in intimacy concluded that the confederate was "maladjusted" and therefore not trustworthy; consequently, reciprocity did not occur.

While the occurrence of reciprocity in dyadic interactions has received empirical support, variance between subjects or individual differences in responding to the disclosure of others has been noted (e.g., by Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969). Researchers have sought to define the limits of reciprocity and to explain the individual differences that might account for this variability. Timing of self-disclosure (Archer & Burleson, 1980), reactivity to loss of freedom (Archer & Berg, 1978), and trustworthiness of the other (Rubin, 1975) are some of the explanations that have been proposed as possible limits to reciprocity in self-disclosure.

Other investigators have sought to consider the relationship between personality variables or individual differences as identified by psychometric scales and self-disclosure. Worthy, Gary, and Kahn (1969) suspected authoritarianisms and found no relationship but note the variability in their data as suggesting an individual difference measure. Without offering an explanation or justification, Davis and Skinner (1974) administered the Eysenck and Marlowe-Crowne. Rubin (1975) assumed that social desirability influenced self-disclosing and he administered a four-item version of the Marlowe-Crowne but also found no relationship.

Pedersen and Berglio (1968) reported that neither neuroticism nor the MMPI-K scale are related to self-disclosure and that introversion shows only a weak relationship. In addition to their brief review of earlier findings, they administered the Personality Inventory (PI) as developed by Pedersen (1962), the Gough Femininity Scale (GFS), and five of the six areas of the Jourard Self-

disclosure Inventory. For females, no significant relationships were found between the personality variables and self-disclosure; however, emotionally unstable males tended to disclose more about themselves on two of the five self-disclosure areas.

Indeed, Jourard has developed a self-disclosure instrument. The Jourard Self-disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ) seeks to identify individual differences on the basis of past self-disclosures and willingness to self-disclose on some sixty items. Regrettably, the JSDQ does not accurately predict self-disclosure (Cozby, 1973).

One individual difference measure and its relationship to reciprocal self-disclosure which has not been considered is Snyder's self-monitoring scale. Snyder (Snyder, 1974, 1979; Snyder & Monson, 1975; Snyder & Tanke, 1976) has proposed that there are individual differences in the extent to which persons rely upon the situation or upon dispositional factors as guides for their behavior. High self-monitors or those individuals "sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations use these (behavioral) cues (from others) as guidelines for managing their own social behavior." Other individuals attend less to situational cues and are not particularly concerned with self-presentation. Their behavior seems to be more guided by dispositional factors than by situational cues. These individuals or low self-monitors are not as concerned with control of the social environment or with impression-management as are high self-monitors (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). To confirm his hypothesis, Snyder has developed a 25 item questionnaire and has demonstrated its convergent and discriminant validity. Of greater importance is the evidence that suggests a relationship between self-monitoring and the interaction of dispositional and situational determinants of behavior. Indeed, such a measure

as self-monitoring might suggest an explanation for the variance found in reciprocal self-disclosure research and serve as an aid in understanding the limits of this phenomena.

Overview of the design and hypotheses: To test the implications of self-monitoring upon self-disclosure. College students who either scored high or low on Snyder's self-monitoring scale were placed with a confederate who revealed either highly intimate information or information that revealed little about him/herself. Thus our design was a 2 (high self-monitors, low self-monitors) x 2 (information high in intimacy, information low in intimacy) factorial design. We predicted that high self-monitors should demonstrate greater reciprocal self-disclosure and less variance in their responses (to the other self-disclosing person) than would low self-monitors. Low self-monitors should attend less to the responses of the other person; therefore, their disclosures should not match the disclosing other's conversation as closely as the high self-monitor's disclosures should match the confederate's conversation. Therefore, the responses of the low self-monitors should not be as closely related to the confederate's disclosures and should also show greater variability than should the responses of the high self-monitors to the confederate's disclosures.

Procedure

Subjects. Participants were 51 introductory psychology students who participated in the experiment for course credit. Of the 51 students, two students (1 male, 1 female) received credit but did participate in the study. These two individuals were acquaintances of the respective confederaters and were thus ineligible for a discussion supposedly between strangers. One person stated that he had heard about the experiment and wanted to take part. His discussion was not coded as there was reason to assume a friend had told him of our hypotheses or at least of the topics.

To obtain information regarding self-monitoring, this measure was entitled Behavior Inventory and administered to a pool of 350 subjects in a group testing session. The participants in our study were aware that this testing session determined their eligibility, but it is doubtful if they knew which particular questionnaire or measure was responsible for their eligibility. A median split was used to classify persons as high or low self-monitors. Subjects who scored $\geq$ 13 were classified as high self-monitors; subjects who scored < 13 were classified as low self-monitors.

Thus, our sample included 48 persons. Twenty-four who were high self-monitors; 24 were low self-monitors. Furthermore, there were an equal number of males and females assigned randomly to each condition.

Method. These 48 students signed up to participate in a study entitled "An Acquaintanceship Process." Each subject who volunteered to take part was paired with a confederate of the same sex. When the subject and the confederate arrived at the exerimental room, the student experimenter informed them that we wished to study the process by which people get to know each other. To accomplish this goal we were going to ask each person to speak on the same four topics (e.g., the things in my past or present of which I am ashamed, aspects of my personality that I dislike) and then to fill out a questionnaire about the discussion. By the luck of the draw, it was determined that the confederate would speak first on a topic, and then the subject would speak on the same topic. The experimenter then started the tape recorder and left the room. For 24 subjects the confederate disclosed information that was highly intimate or revealing on all four topics; for the other 24 participants the confederate disclosed low intimate information on all four topics. These confederate disclosures were standardized scripts, and the decision as to whether the information was high or low was determined by a random order. Furthermore,

confederates and the student experimenters were blind as to whether the subjects were high self-monitors or low self-monitors.

Following the information exchange, each subject filled out a questionnaire concerning his/her impressions of and his liking for the other person (our confederate), his/her feelings about the discussion, and his/her recall of issues discussed. Participants were then debriefed, thanked for their time, and sworn to secrecy.

Dependent variables and rating procedures. The major dependent variables were depth of disclosure or "the amount of information revealed weighted in relation to its depth," emotional investment or "how deeply the subject is searching within himself," and imitation or "the degree of similarity between the interviewer's and the subject's disclosures." These dimensions are described by Davis and Sloan (1976). And, our raters were trained using the Davis and Sloan Self-Disclosure Rating Manual. This Manual describes these three dimensions and proposes a five-point scale with anchors or descriptors identified for each of the five points on that scale as a means of rating that dimension. A male rater and a female rater, blind as to experimental condition, rated all the tapes first for depth and investment and then later for imitation of disclosure. Interrater reliability was .93 for depth, .78 for emotional investment, and .96 for imitation of disclosure. In addition to obtaining ratings on these three dimensions, we also analyzed the post-discussion questionnaire to obtain indices for amount of information recalled, participant's discomfort or anxiety during discussion, impressions of the confederate, and impression of the intimacy of the confederate's disclosure.

Results

Manipulation check on intimacy of topics. As a manipulation check on intimacy of topics, ANOVAs were performed on each of three questions from the

post-discussion questionnaire which addressed the issue of intimacy of the confederate's disclosure.

For the question "How intimate or personal were the topics discussed by the other person?" there was a main effect for intimacy of topic, $F(1,40) = 15.15$, $p < .005$. Subjects who heard the confederate present highly intimate information rated the material as more intimate ($M = 7.04$) than did subjects who heard the confederate give low intimate information. No other effects were significant, $Fs < 1$.

For the question "How much did the other person share with you about him(her)self?", again the only significant finding was a main effect for intimacy of topic manipulation, $F(1,40) = 7.95$, $p < .01$. All other effects were insignificant, $Fs < 1$. Subjects in the high intimate condition evaluated the confederate as sharing more about himself/herself ($M = 7.41$) than did subjects in the low intimate condition report ($M = 6.20$). A similar pattern was found for our third question of the intimate topic manipulation check.

In response to the question "How open did the other person seem while talking about self?" the only significant effect was the main effect for intimacy of topic, $F(1,40) = 11.50$ $p < .005$. Subjects in the high intimate condition rated the confederate as more open than did subjects in the low intimate condition.

In summary, on all three questions the confederate in the high intimacy condition was perceived as more intimate, more sharing, and more open than he was perceived in the low intimate condition.

Depth of disclosure. To analyze ratings on depth of disclosure, raters' evaluations were summed across the four topics and a 2 (high self-monitor, low self-monitor) x 2 (low intimate topics, high intimate topics) analysis of variance was performed. The analysis revealed a main effect for the intimacy of

topic manipulation. Subjects who heard the confederate disclose intimate information responded with disclosures that were rated as more self-revealing than did subjects in the low intimate condition, $F(1,40) = 8.81$, $p < .005$. Thus, this finding supports the notion of reciprocity. Participants seemed to respond, in kind, to the information received. When more intimate disclosures were made to them, they reciprocated with more in depth-disclosures themselves.

Furthermore, a significant intimacy of topic x self-monitoring effect was revealed, $F(1,40) = 7.83$, $p < .007$. High self-monitors in the high intimate topic condition disclosed in more depth than did low self-monitors in the high intimate condition. However, in the low intimate condition low self-monitors disclosed more in depth than did high self-monitors.

Emotional investment. A similar pattern of results was found when a 2x2 ANOVA for the summed scores across topics on the dependent variable, emotional investment, was considered. Again, there was a significant main effect for the intimacy of topic condition, $F(1,40) = 14.87$, $p < .001$. The ratings on what the subjects were feeling or how deeply immersed they were in exploring themselves revealed that subjects in the high intimacy condition were rated as more immersed in the disclosure than were subjects in the low intimate condition. In the high intimate condition, to the more emotionally invested disclosure, subjects responded with more of their innermost feelings: they reciprocated. There was also a significant topic by self-monitoring interaction $F(1,40) = p < .01$ for emotional investment. High self-monitors in the high intimate condition were more emotionally invested in their disclosures than were low self-monitors in the high intimate condition. Yet, in the low intimate condition, high self-monitors were less involved or less emotionally invested in their disclosures than were low self-monitors. Here the low self-monitors were rated higher in emotional investment.

Imitation. On imitation of the other's disclosure, the 2x2 analysis of variance revealed a significant main effect for self-monitoring. The high self-monitors' disclosures were rated as more imitative of, or similar to, the confederate's disclosures than were low self-monitors' disclosures. No other effect was significant.

In addition to considering the evaluation of disclosures summed across all four topics, we also examined the disclosures with regard to each of the three dependent variables by topic. The pattern of results found for each dependent variable--depth of disclosure, emotional investment, and imitation was essentially the same when we analyzed our data topic by topic as when we summed across all four topics.

Questionnaire responses. Analysis of variance procedures were performed on the dependent variables, comfort or anxiety during discussion and liking or positive regard for the confederate. (These variables were created by summing scores on appropriate questionnaire items.) Preliminary 2x2 analysis of variance procedures revealed no consistent pattern of results for either dependent variable.

Discussion

In summary, our hypotheses were supported by our results. Participants in our acquaintship process paradigm responded in kind to the self-disclosures that they received: they reciprocated. As measured by depth of disclosure, persons in the more intimate condition disclosed more about themselves than did persons in the low intimate condition. Furthermore, those participants in the more intimate condition not only disclosed more in-depth information but were evaluated as more involved in their disclosures. In other words, both in what they said and in how they said it, persons in the high intimate condition revealed more intimate information about themselves than did subjects who

received little information from the other. This adjustment or response to the disclosures of others is support for the notion that dyadic interactions are reciprocal. Taken alone this finding is interesting but provides little insight into understanding the dimensions or limitations of reciprocal self-disclosure.

Of greater interest is the finding that high self-monitors are more sensitive and responsive to the verbal behaviors of others than are low self-monitors. High self-monitors were more imitative of the disclosures of others than were low self-monitors. Finding themselves in a laboratory situation in which the norms for appropriate behaviors may be ambiguous, high self-monitors closely modeled the content of their disclosures after the content of the disclosing confederate. Not only did they model his/her disclosures with regard to content or material, but they also were more likely to reflect his/her emotional tone and his/her depth of disclosure.

Our manipulation check suggests that all subjects had some awareness as to the level of intimacy of the disclosures addressed to them. If high self-monitoring individuals did not differ from low self-monitoring individuals in this awareness, then the difference in behavior must be understood by use of this information. This knowledge seems to have guided the responses or functioned as discriminate cues for the responses of high self-monitoring individuals. Low self-monitoring individuals may be aware of others but may be more independent of situational cues.

While we would like to generalize our finding to situations outside the lab, we must remember that we created a situation in which the norms for appropriate action were ambiguous. In settings with clearly established norms or with the opportunity to choose our environment, individual differences in regards to self-monitoring may impact upon behavior in other subtle ways (or not at all). Our findings do suggest that, in those situations in which the norms

are yet to be established, we can expect high self-monitoring individuals to be sensitive to social, situational cues and to use these cues as behavioral guides.

In conclusion, the research on reciprocal self-disclosure as well as on self-monitoring seems to be just beginning. Support for the phenomena of reciprocal self-disclosure and for the personality construct of self-monitoring is developing; however, major questions still remain. The theoretical explanation for reciprocal self-disclosure is still a lively controversy, just as the robustness of the self-monitoring construct for differences in everyday behaviors is an unanswered question. Hopefully, we have contributed one small piece to the puzzle with our look at the effect of self-monitoring on reciprocal self-disclosure.

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Ratings of Self-Disclosure

Depth of Disclosure

	High Self-Monitors	Low Self-Monitors
Highly Intimate Disclosures	4.33	3.72
Low Intimate Disclosures	3.39	3.69

(Mean Ratings Across Four Topics)

Emotional Involvement

	High Self-Monitors	Low Self-Monitors
Highly Intimate Disclosures	4.08	3.68
Low Intimate Disclosures	3.17	3.47

(Mean Ratings Across Four Topics)

Imitation

	High Self-Monitors	Low Self-Monitors
Highly Intimate Disclosures	3.83	2.75
Low Intimate Disclosures	3.63	3.00

(Mean Ratings Across Four Topics)